



by Peter Beutler

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Fiction

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Weissenau

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review

Peter Beutler's gripping debut novel is based on a true story. *Weissenau* takes us far beyond the stereotypical national images of mountains and cuckoo clocks and draws attention to the rise of right-wing extremism in contemporary Switzerland.

Beutler's hero is the young and idealistic Bert Lauber, a police officer who is investigating the brutal assault of a homeless person at a train station in Interlaken. Much to his surprise, Lauber encounters serious resistance to his enquiries among his own colleagues. Many policemen appear to be sympathetic towards the city's neo-Nazi skinhead population. Lauber succeeds in linking his original case with a number of isolated attacks on foreigners and a drive-by shooting against a home for asylum seekers, and discovers that the culprits are members of a secret order of right-wing extremists. Beutler skilfully introduces an alternative narrative dimension by giving the leader of the skinhead order a voice and portraying his descent into extremist violence. Although Lauber apprehends the criminals in a dramatic show-down, right-wing politicians remain in power and the police force is still riddled with prejudice and corruption.

Weissenau is a striking thriller which delivers a poignant message about the darker side of Swiss society.

about the author

Peter Beutler, born 1942, grew up in Zwieselberg, a small village in the Bernese Alps. As a chemist, he was a teacher at the high school

Musegg. Since 2007 he has lived with his wife in Leissigen near Lake Thun.

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